



United States Congress

NEWS RELEASE

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FIRES: DELEGATION PLEDGES ASSISTANCE, CALLS FOR FLEXIBILITY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Idaho Congressional Delegation called on the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to ensure land managers in Idaho are given maximum flexibility to help restore the land following the catastrophic wildfires this year. Idaho is currently in the unenviable position of having the largest fires during one of this nation's worst fire years and the largest in decades. To date this year, more than 850,000 acres in Idaho have burned. More than 600,000 acres burned in one fire alone – the Murphy Complex fire on the Idaho-Nevada border.

In their letters, Senators Larry Craig and Mike Crapo and Congressmen Mike Simpson and Bill Sali said:

“Some Idaho ranchers have lost almost all of their rangeland in the wildfire while many more have lost large portions of their rangeland. With that in mind, we need to begin working right now to explore every possible option for allowing Idaho ranchers to find suitable ground on which they can feed their livestock.

“These options should include emergency permit waivers to allow greater utilization of acres not impacted by wildfire, temporary utilization of areas that are not currently available for grazing, and any other option that might provide temporary relief for Idaho ranchers.

“Further, we ask that the Department coordinate with other federal agencies, including the Department of Interior and the Department of Homeland Security, to ensure maximum cooperation across the federal government in working with State and local agencies and in responding to the needs of Idaho citizens.

“Mr. Secretary, the needs of Idaho ranchers will require the federal government and its employees to think ‘outside the box’ and utilize every imaginable emergency authority permitted under the law to assist those impacted by wildfire. We stand ready to assist you in this effort and appreciate all that you, the Department of Agriculture, and its employees are already doing to fight these fires and assist our constituents.”

The Delegation also pledged to assist with the financial needs of fighting the fires. Craig is the Ranking Republican on the Senate Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. Simpson serves on the full House Appropriations Committee.